



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 18, 2007

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Major Alien Smuggling Organization Taken Down

TUCSON – Pedro Ramos-Lemus, 32, of Casa Grande, AZ, Elizabeth Martinez, 27, a Mexican National, Julio Cesar Baldondegro-Celaya, 32, a Mexican National, Roman Perez-Munoz, 33, a Mexican National, Maria Rodriguez, 49, of Tucson, AZ, Yara Karina Mendez, 26, a Mexican National, Rosa Imelda Hernandez, 36, a Mexican National, Alfredo Chavarin-Valenzuela, 39, a Mexican National, Rito Najera-Traviso, Jr., 42, a Mexican National, Mary Lovina Najera, 38, of Tucson, AZ, and Rito Najera III, 19, of Tucson, AZ, were arrested and charged with Conspiracy to Harbor and Transport Illegal Aliens.

On May 16, 2007, after a year long investigation, Tucson ICE Special Agents executed six federal search warrants and two federal arrest warrants at residences associated with a major alien smuggling organization in and around Tucson, Arizona. Seven defendants were arrested in Tucson, one in Casa Grande, and one in Phoenix. Within the last two weeks, two additional defendants were also charged in the investigation after being linked to an alleged kidnapping and shooting of one of the defendants. A total of nine vehicles were seized, including a 2002 BMW valued at \$35,000, over \$150,000 cash, and numerous high-end electronic entertainment systems. The defendants remain in federal custody, and there are three remaining fugitives (see attachments for profiles).

ICE agents are asking anyone with information about the criminal organization or the fugitives to please contact the ICE toll-free tipline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE

The defendants are believed to be responsible for smuggling over 500 aliens per week into the United States near Sasabe, Arizona. Some members of the alien smuggling organization are known to carry weapons and their organization has been connected to numerous bail outs, failures to yield, and dangerous interference with law enforcement officers on local highways.

A conviction for Conspiracy to Transport and Harbor Illegal Aliens carries a maximum penalty of 10 years, a \$ 250,000 fine, or both. In determining an actual sentence, the United States District Court Judge assigned to the case will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

A criminal complaint is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) with assistance from the U.S. Border Patrol. The prosecution is being handled by the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

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MAG NUMBERS: 07-4565M, 07-03530M, 07-00493M, 07-00668M
RELEASE NUMBER: 2007-132(Ramos-Lemus, et al)

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